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Chas. A. Dunnington

The Battle near Spotsylvania Courthouse on May 18th, 1864.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, C. V.

ON THE NIGHT OF

JANUARY 20, 1905,

BY

COL. W. E. CUTSHAW.

PUBLISHED BY
R. E. LEE CAMP, No. 1, CONFEDERATE VETERANS
RICHMOND, VA.

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WM. ELLIS JONES,
PRINTER,
RICHMOND, VA.

Gift
C. C. Dunnington

ADDRESS.

My Comrades:

In accepting your kind invitation to repeat the address made before the Association of Richmond Howitzers, I beg to refer to the dates of the several battles and engagements in the neighborhood of Spotsylvania Court-house that the distinct points of this address may be clearly brought forth, without confusion or mixing with those of other dates.

After the battles of the Wilderness, the army of the Potomac, under General Grant, moved to the left towards Spotsylvania. The army of Northern Virginia, under General Lee, also moved and confronted the Northern army, and, on the 8th of May, had an engagement with it near Spotsylvania Court-house. On the 10th of May portions of the Confederate lines were attacked by the Federal army and repulsed. On the 12th of May the centre of the Confederate lines was assaulted and broken by the Federal army at what was known as the Salient, or Bloody Angle, threatening a great disaster to the Confederate army. On the 13th of May the Confederate lines were moved back to a revised position, nearly a mile in rear of the former Salient, and these new lines were assaulted by an early morning attack of May 18th by very nearly the same Federal troops that were engaged on the 12th. It is this attack and repulse that makes the subject of my paper. Both the army of the Potomac and the army of Northern Virginia had seen service in the field for nearly three years, and in every essential were, indeed, veteran soldiers. It is doubtful if the courage and the endurance of any soldiers in any army was surpassed by that of the Confederate soldier, and his example, either in attack or resistance, is not surpassed by the armies of the world, impelled as he was by the purest patriotism under unexampled Christian leaders to do his duty, with none of that fatalism characterizing the reckless fighting of Mohammedans, Hindoos and Japanese.

The field of this engagement is embraced between the Po and the Ny rivers, branches of the Mattapony, a rolling, undulating, well-

wooded country, intersected by small branches from these streams, which are sometimes low and marshy. The map herewith presented is an enlarged one, taken from one of the War Record's office, and shows, marked in red and black, the lines of the works occupied by the troops of both armies engaged in the several battles in this neighborhood. The positions of the armies on May 18th, 1864, were as follows:

CONFEDERATE ARMY.

Longstreet's First Corps (Anderson commanding), on the extreme Confederate right, composed of:

Kershaw's Division, Field's Division, Pickett's Division (absent), with the artillery of this corps. Not in action as far as known.

Hill's Third Corps (Early commanding), in centre on left of Anderson, composed of:

Anderson's Division, Heth's Division, Wilcox's Division, with the artillery of this corps. Infantry not in action, but Third Corps guns replying to Warren's.

Ewell's Second Corps, next on the extreme Confederate left, composed of:

Early's (Gordon) Division, perhaps slightly; Johnson's Division, partly in action; Rodes' Division (possibly), slightly, with the artillery of this corps. Firing in a desultory manner from the works, with infantry, but with 29 guns vigorously in action also firing from works, and as follows:

GUNS.

Second Howitzers (Jones'), Third Howitzers (Smith's), Powhatan Artillery (Dance's), Salem Artillery (Griffin's) ...	15
Orange Artillery (Fry's), with men of other batteries; Staunton Artillery (Garber's), with men of other batteries....	8
Guns from either Braxton or Nelson	6
	29

FEDERAL ARMY.

Warren's Fifth Corps, on the Federal left, composed of:

Four Divisions—24,423 April 30th, and 19,321 June 1st. Infantry not in action, but 26 guns were, as a diversion in front of Hill's Corps.

Hancock's Second Corps, next to Fifth and to the right of it, composed of:

Four Divisions—27,007 April 30th, and 28,327 June 1st. Barlow's and Gibbons' Divisions in the assault, with 16 guns in action. (1st New Hampshire, 1st Rhode Island, 4th U. S., and 1st New York.)

Wright's Sixth Corps, next to Second and to its right, composed of:

Three Divisions—23,165 April 30th, and 20,390 June 1st. Getty's and Russell's Divisions in the assault, assisted by Hancock's guns.

Burnside's Ninth Corps, next to Sixth and on the extreme right, composed of four divisions—19,840 April 30th, and 18,147 June 1st. Potter's and Crittenden's Divisions in the assault, with sixteen guns in action. (2nd Maine, 14th Massachusetts, 7th Maine, and 24th New York.)

The above numbers are from the official returns of these dates and Gibbons' report (10,734) is for his division on May 16th. No numbers in the field returns are given of the Confederate army about this period, and of the Federal army, with the exception of Gibbons' Division of May 16th, are for April 30th and June 1st, 1864.

Taking Gibbon's Division at	10,000	} out of 27,000
Barlow's Division at	3,500	
Getty's Division at ..	3,000	} out of 20,000
Russell's (Wheaton's) Division at	3,000	
Potter's Division at	3,000	} out of 18,000
Crittenden's (Ledley's) Division at	2,500	
Total,	25,000	

We may safely assume that 25,000 infantry were in the charge of the assaulting columns of the Federal army, supported by the fire of 32 guns, and that 29 rapidly served guns, together with a light desultory infantry fire on the Confederate side, were ready to meet it.

With these forces engaged, the action commenced early on the morning of the 18th, with the retirement of the Confederate pickets and skirmishers, and the advance of the Federal infantry in the

several formations referred to in the reports. That this was a matured plan, settled upon by Generals Grant and Meade, and attempted in execution in a determined manner to carry the Confederate works on Ewell's front, the following quotations from the published official records fully establish:

Major-General Humphrey's, Chief of Staff to General Meade, page — of his book, says:

"It had been suggested by Major-General Wright, and also by myself, that, after the lapse of a few days, a return by night to the enemy's left, which would probably be abandoned, or very much weakened by our concentration on his right, might afford a good opportunity to attack there. General Wright's suggestion was for his corps only to undertake it; but it was concluded to send both the Second and Sixth Corps, and on the 17th Generals Hancock and Wright were ordered to move their troops in the night to the works captured on the 12th, and attack the enemy's new intrenchments there at daylight on the 18th, the Sixth Corps on the right of the Second. General Burnside was directed to attack in conjunction with them, and General Warren to open his artillery at the same time and be prepared for the offensive. The Second Corps, being nearest to the point of attack, led, the Sixth Corps following. The troops were in the position designated before daylight, and at 4 A. M. Gibbon and Barlow moved forward to assault, their troops in lines of brigades. Birney and Tyler were held in reserve. The artillery was posted in the first line of works at the apex of the salient, firing over the troops. The Sixth Corps advanced on the right of the Second. But the enemy was on the alert, and the new intrenchments across the base of the Salient were of the most formidable character, being concealed on their right by woods, and having on that part of their front a heavy slashing, and on their left front, which was in the open ground of the Harrison farm, lines of abatis. As the troops approached, they were met with a heavy musketry and artillery fire which completely swept the ground in front; but, notwithstanding, they passed forward to the slashing and abatis, and made several gallant attempts to carry the enemy's lines, but without success.

"Upon its being reported to General Meade that there was but little probability of the enemy's lines being carried, he directed

the attack to be discontinued, and the troops were accordingly withdrawn.

"General Burnside made the attack directed on the morning of the 18th, with the Divisions of Crittenden and Potter, and all his artillery, uniting on the right with Hancock, but could not carry the enemy's intrenchments. The artillery of the Fifth Corps also opened and continued its fire for several hours."

Mr. Chas. A. Dana in his report, pages 72 and 73 of records, to Secretary Staunton, says: "The report of General Wright, who had reconnoitered the ground over which our proposed attack upon the enemy's right was to be made, caused General Grant to change the plan detailed in my dispatch of last evening. Instead of attacking on our left Hancock and Wright have made a night march to our right flank and attacked at daylight upon the same lines where Hancock made his successful assault on Thursday last. We have as yet no news of the result. Warren's guns opened a heavy fire upon the Rebel lines at the Courthouse at 4:30, and Hancock and Wright made their attack this morning in good style, forced the first and second lines of Rebel riflepits, and for a time were confident that at last they had struck the lair of the enemy, but advancing through the forest each corps presently found itself confronted by heavy interior works, protected, especially in Hancock's line of advance by impassible abatis. Barlow's division of Hancock's corps attempted in vain to charge through this obstacle, and held their ground before it for an hour or more under a galling fire of canister. The difficulty of storming the Rebel intrenched camp on that side being evidently of the most extreme character, and both corps having artfully, but unsuccessfully, sought for a weak point where they might break through, Grant at 9 o'clock ordered the attack to cease.

"Warren maintained a vigorous artillery duel with the Rebel batteries around the Courthouse until 11 o'clock, when both parties ceased firing. Our losses by the morning's work are reckoned by General Meade at 500 killed and wounded."

Medical Director McParlin, page 232 of Records, says, "On the morning of the 18th the Second Corps moved to the right and attacked the enemy's works; 552 wounded were the result, and the character of the wounds were unusually severe, a large proportion being caused by shell and canister."

Major-General Hancock, page 337, says, "On the 17th, Tyler's division of heavy artillery, Brigadier-General R. O. Tyler commanding, and the Corcoran Legion (infantry) joined the Second Corps, making in all a re-enforcement of 8,000 men. The Corcoran Legion was assigned to Gibbon's division. I had received orders during the day to move my command to the works I had captured on the 12th, and to attack the enemy at daylight on the 18th, in the entrenchments he then held in front of that position. The Sixth Corps was directed to form on my right and assail the enemy's line at the same hour. Before daylight on the 18th, the troops were in the position designated and the preparations for the attack completed. At 4 A. M., Gibbon and Barlow moved forward to the assault, their troops in line of brigades. My artillery was posted in the first line of works, firing during the action over our troops in front. Birney and Tyler were in reserve. The enemy held a strong line of intrenchments about one-half mile in front of and parallel to the works we had stormed on the 12th. His position was concealed by the forest and protected by heavy slashing and abatis.

"As our troops approached his line they encountered a severe fire of musketry and artillery, which completely swept his front, making great havoc in our ranks. They pressed forward however, until they arrived at the edge of the abatis, which with the heavy fire, arrested their progress. Many gallant attempts were made by our troops to penetrate the enemy's line, but without success. Finding that I was losing quite heavily, and there was but little probability of my being able to carry the enemy's position, I communicated the state of affairs to the major-general commanding, and was directed by him to discontinue the attack. Accordingly at 10 A. M. I withdrew my troops and occupied the line of works in front of the Landrum House."

General Hancock, page 361 of Records, says, "May 17, 1864, 8 A. M., Tyler's division, about 8,000 strong, mostly heavy artillery, joined the Second Corps, which will re-enforce us sufficiently to make up our losses at the Wilderness, the Po, and Spotsylvania. The division massed near the Fredericksburg road.

"No movement of the Second Corps until dark, when we marched back to the works we had captured on the 12th, instant, at which point it is determined again to assault the enemy to-morrow morning.

"4:10 A. M., Barlow's and Gibbon's divisions having been formed in front of the captured works moved forward to assail the enemy in the lines he had occupied after the battle at this point on the 12th. Tyler's division in reserve in rifle-pits running from the Landrum House to the Salient, Birney's division still remaining with General Burnside.' Gibbon's and Barlow's divisions now traversed the same ground which we had fought so desperately on six days since, and as but a portion of the dead of that day's contest had been buried, the stench which arose from them was so sickening and terrible that many of the men and officers became deathly sick from it. The appearance of the dead who had been exposed to the sun so long, was horrible in the extreme as we marched past and over them, a sight never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

"At 4:10 A. M., Gibbon and Barlow moved forward to the assault, their troops in line of brigades. My artillery was posted in the first line of works, firing during the action over our troops in front.

"As soon as our lines came within range we were received with a most destructive fire of musketry and artillery from the enemy, who was snugly fixed in heavy intrenchments protected by abatis. Our men gallantly rushed on until they came to the edge of this abatis, which was so heavy and firm that they could not penetrate it under the fire, and our lines stood at that point delivering their fire until 10 o'clock, when we were withdrawn, it being found impracticable to carry the position and our losses were heavy in this assault in killed and wounded. The Sixth Corps attacked at the same time with us on our right, with the same result."

General Francis C. Barlow, page 369 of Records, says, "Attacked the enemy's left May 18th."

General John R. Brooke, of Barlow's division of Hancock's Corps, page 411 of Records, says, "At 4:10 A. M., moved forward in support of Second and Third Brigades, which were ordered to attack the enemy. Occupied the position taken on the 12th, and remained there. No fighting done by my brigade, though exposed to a heavy artillery fire throughout the day, losing heavily in officers and men. The assault made on our part of the line was not successful."

Major-General John Gibbon, of Hancock's Corps, pages 431 and 432 of Records, says, "At daylight on the 18th, the division was in position at the breastworks taken on the 12th, ready for another

assault on the enemy's interior line. The Corcoran Legion, Colonel Mathew Murphy, Sixty-ninth Regiment, New York National Guard Artillery, commanding, had the day before joined the army and been assigned to my division as the Fourth Brigade, and Colonel Thomas S. Smyth, First Delaware Volunteers, and Colonel H. B. McKeen, Eighty-first Pennsylvania Volunteers, reported to me for duty, and were assigned to the command of the Third and First Brigades, respectively. The division was formed in two lines, the first line composed of McKeen's and Murphy's Brigades (First and Fourth) in line of battle connecting with Barlow's division on the left, and the Sixth Corps on the right, and supported by the second line. Owen's and Smyth's brigades (Second and Third) formed in the line of battalions en masse. Directly in front of the center of my line was a thick, heavy wood, which prevented any considerable portion of the division from being seen from any one point. The troops moved to the assault at 4:30 A. M., and gallantly carried some of the enemy's works in their front, when the second line was ordered forward in support. We soon, however, came upon the enemy's main line of works well manned both with infantry and artillery, and protected in front with abatis, from which the fire was so heavy that the troops made no headway against it and were forced to retire"

Colonel Thomas A. Smyth, of Hancock's Corps, page 449 of Records, says, "I assumed command of this brigade by order of Brigadier-General Gibbon, May 17, 1864, the army then being in the vicinity of Spotsylvania Courthouse. About 10:30 P. M., I was ordered to mass the brigade in front of the Landrum House, and near the vacated line of the enemy's intrenchments, before daylight, which was accomplished, the brigade being in column of battalions between the Landrum House and the road. Subsequently it was deployed into line by battalions in mass, and I was ordered by Brigadier-General Gibbon to move forward in support of the Corcoran Legion. At daylight the Legion moved forward and I followed at short supporting distance. The first line was repulsed, and my brigade taking a position in a ravine covered their retreat. I at once deployed a line of skirmishers and held this position until 12:35 P. M., when in obedience to orders from General Gibbon, I withdrew to the second line of intrenchments."

Colonel John C. Tidball, Chief Artillery, Hancock's Corps, page

519 of Records, says, "May 18th moved from Harris' house to the deserted house, and Roder, Ames, and Rickett's to Landrum's. Sent Edgell's battery to Colonel Tompkins. Brown, Roder and Ames, in first line, silenced Rebel battery; 12 M. still in position. Clark and Ricketts moved down to works on extreme right. Edgall already there with Birneys division."

General G. K. Warren, page 542 of Records, says, "May 18, 1864, whole army had moved off to our right to make an assault on the enemy, and I commenced a cannonade at daylight with 26 guns, as a diversion. This occasioned a brisk artillery duel between myself and Hill's Corps. Our forces found the enemy prepared and strongly posted on the right, and made no serious attack."

Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, Chief Artillery, Warren's Corps, page 644 of Records, says, "May 18,1864. Second and Sixth Corps having returned to the right of the general line, and so uncovered the left, Hart's Bigelow's and Walcott's batteries of light 12 pounders were posted in the neighborhood of the Anderson house to protect that flank, should the enemy attack there. Before daylight Rittenhouse's battery was pushed forward on the pike to our advanced works, about 1,400 yards from the Courthouse, and was joined by Taft's (Fifth New York Independent) battery of six 20 pounder Parrotts, which had temporarily joined the brigade the night before, and Sheldon's battery, making 14 guns, under command of Major Fitzhugh. At the same time Captain Cooper, with his own, Breck's and Phillips' batteries, making 12 three-inch guns, was posted on a sharp knoll to the front, and some 400 yards to the left of Major Fitzhugh's line, making an angle of about 60 degrees with it. The position of all these batteries was excellent. The first was protected by fair works, and the rapid descent of the knoll from the rear to Cooper's afforded excellent shelter for the limbers. The enemy had 20 pieces behind their lines, in front and to their right of the Courthouse. At the time the Second Corps advanced on the right the batteries on both sides opened. The engagement was brisk for near three-quarters of an hour, and the practice on both sides was very accurate. Fire was kept up at intervals during the day without any express object, and with no perceptible result, except the silencing of the enemy's guns."

General George W. Getty, of Wright's Corps, page 679 of Records, says, "On the night of the 17th, (May 1864), the division moved

back to the angle, and having formed in columns of brigades in the following order from front to rear, Wheaton's (First), Edward's (Fourth), Bidwell's (Third), and Grant's (Second), in conjunction with the Second Corps and the remainder of the Sixth, made an attack at daylight on the enemy's position on the right and front of the angle. The attack was not successful, and the division was withdrawn."

Ben. Frank Wheaton, of Wright's Corps, pages 685 and 686 of Record, says, "Remained in the camp until May 17, (1864), when at 8:30 P. M., the brigade moved with the rest of the division to the extreme right of the army opposite the angle, mentioned May 12, and the scene of the obstinate fighting of that day, and formed at 3:30 A. M., May 18, on the right of the Second Corps. At 4:30 A. M., in conjunction with the Second Corps, on the left, we moved forward to assault the enemy's position, a quarter mile beyond his works vacated the 13th. The advance was conducted in good order, notwithstanding the many natural and artificial obstacles in the vicinity of the enemy's old line of pits, until we arrived within 300 yards of their new position, when they suddenly opened with canister and musketry. The brigade line extended from left to right in the following order: One Hundred and Second Pennsylvania Volunteers, Ninety-third Pennsylvania Volunteers, Ninety-eighth Pennsylvania Volunteers, Sixty-second New York Volunteers, One Hundred and Thirty-ninth Pennsylvania Volunteers. The other brigades of the division were in successive lines in rear. The fire of the enemy was mainly directed to the One Hundred and Second and Ninety-third Pennsylvania Volunteers, as they were exposed through a large opening in the woods. At this point also the line was at right angles with an interior line of works, which had been vacated by the enemy and was untenable to us. The traverses and abatis in rear and front of these works and the severe artillery fire which enfiladed them rendered it impossible to keep the line connected, and the Ninety-third Pennsylvania Volunteers was moved by a flank in rear of the Ninety-eighth Pennsylvania Volunteers. As the Second Corps had been checked in its advance and its right had fallen back, leaving my flank exposed, and nothing as yet had formed on my right, I deemed it unsafe to advance farther, and the brigade was halted where the above separation occurred—the One Hundred and Second Pennsylvania Volunteers

on the left and the balance of the brigade on the right under cover of the woods. The enemy continued to shell both positions for an hour, the brigade and the lines in support losing many men and officers therefrom. At 8 o'clock the brigade of Colonel Smith, of the Third Division formed on the right. At 9 o'clock a staff officer of the division commander came for the first time to learn the situation of affairs, to whom I represented the impracticability of a farther advance. A short time after I received orders direct from the corps commander to withdraw, which was done successfully under cover of the woods."

General L. A. Grant, of Wright's Corps, page 696 of Record, says, "At daylight on the morning of the 18th, both corps charged the enemy's position. This brigade was formed in two lines of battle, the old regiments in front and the Eleventh Regiment constituting the second line. Three brigades, each formed in one line of battle, were in our front. An advance of about half a mile was made under a heavy artillery fire. This brigade (constituting the fourth and fifth lines) came up on the first line in the advance and halted. No farther advance was made, and the troops in our front retired. After holding the front line for some time, the whole command was ordered to retire, which was done in good oder. Our loss, though not so heavy as in other engagements, was considerable, principally from artillery."

General D. D. Bidwell of Getty's division, Wright's Corps, page 720 of Records, says, "On the evening of the 17th (May, 1864), we moved to the position in front of the angle, where on the evening of the 18th, the division was formed in four lines of a brigade each. We were in the third line, and it getting light the advance was made without waiting for the Third division to complete their formation. Upon advancing, the Second Corps gave way on our left, and the two front lines obliquing to the left, brought us in the front line, and the Third division failing to advance exposed us to an artillery fire, which took us in reverse, on the flank (and) in front. The line on our left halting, our line was halted where we remained until withdrawn by orders. In this engagement our loss was heavy and most from artillery."

General A. E. Burnside, pages 910 and 911 of Records, says, "On the morning of the 18th (May, 1864), a general attack was made on the enemy's line, and after two or three charges by the divisions

of Generals Crittenden and Potter, which resulted in considerable loss, it was concluded that it could not be carried by assault. Some ground, however, was gained which commanded parts of their line. This attack was well supported by the artillery, particularly by the batteries of General Wilcox's division."

General J. H. Ledlie, of Burnside's Corps, pages 917 and 918, of Records, says "On the 18th of May (1864), I received orders to advance upon and feel the enemy's position. I pushed forward my brigade, composed of the Fourth and Tenth U. S. Infantry, Thirty-fifth, Fifty-sixth, Fifty-seventh and Fifty-ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, which moved up in admirable style, and reached the abatis in front of them, and it being impossible to penetrate this, I ordered the brigade to fall back and did so, receiving a terrible fire from the enemy. The officers and men behaved with great gallantry, and deserve much credit."

General R. B. Potter, of Burnside's Corps, page 920 of Record, says, "The usual skirmishing and artillery firing continued till the morning of the 18th (May, 1864), when we attacked the enemy with vigor all along the line, made three charges on his works and met with considerable loss. We did not succeed in carrying his works, but gained some important ground, rendering parts of his line untenable."

General W. N. Pendleton, General Lee's Chief of Artillery, pages 1054 and 1056, of Records, says, "(May 12, 1864) Major Cutshaw was assigned to the command of Hardaway's battalion and Major Page put in command of the combined remnants of his own and Cutshaw's battalions.

"On the morning of the 18th, the enemy again attempted to carry the line still held by the Second corps, near the scene of the former conflict. This time, however, he met guns in position to receive him. His heavy force was allowed to get within good range of our breastworks. There the guns under Colonel Carter (Hardaway's battalion commanded by Cutshaw and Page's reorganized) opened upon him a murderous fire of spherical case and canister, which at once arrested his advance, threw his columns into confusion, and forced him to retreat in disorder. Heavily as he suffered on this occasion, our loss was nothing, and this was accomplished against a force of 12,000 picked infantry by twenty-nine pieces of artillery alone, but well handled."

General R. S. Ewell, page 1073 of Records, says, "As it was unadvisable to continue efforts to retake the salient with the force at my command, a new line was laid out during the day by General Lee's chief engineer, some 800 yards in rear of the first and constructed at night. After midnight my forces were quietly withdrawn to it and artillery placed in position, but his efforts and losses on the 12th seemed to have exhausted the enemy, and all was quiet till May 18 (1864), when a strong force advanced past the McCool house toward our new line. When well within range General Long opened upon them with thirty pieces of artillery, which with the fire of our skirmishers, broke and drove them back with severe loss. We afterwards learned that they were two fresh divisions, nearly 10,000 strong, just come up from the rear."

General A. L. Long, Chief Artillery, Ewell's Corps, pages 1087 and 1088 of Records, says, "Everything remained quiet along the lines till the morning of the 18th (May, 1864). The enemy about 9 A. M. advanced a heavy force against our new line. He was allowed to come within good canister range of our breastworks. Carter's division of artillery then opened a most murderous fire of cannister and spherical case-shot, which at once arrested his advance, threw his columns into confusion, and forced him to a disorderly retreat. His loss was very heavy; ours was nothing. This attack fairly illustrates the immense power of artillery well handled. A select force of 10,000 or 12,000 infantry was broken and driven from the field in less than thirty minutes by twenty-nine pieces of artillery alone."

This account given in the published reports of each side seems somewhat at variance, looking at it from opposite sides as we do. It may not, therefore, be out of place to speak of the action as it must have appeared to the Confederates. They were quietly posted in the new line of works on Ewell's front and had been there nearly six days with scarcely a picket fire on their immediate front. On this morning the troops had finished their simple breakfast and were standing around waiting events of the day. None were aware that a movement by the enemy was going on beyond the old line of works, and certainly the Confederates had no knowledge that he had started at daylight a real attack of our lines. If these movements took place at 4 or 4:30 A. M., they must have been in marching to and over the old abandoned works which he terms "captur-

ing" the first and second lines, and for the purpose of getting into positions and arranging for the assault when it did take place. The old works were abandoned and deserted days before and needed no capture, and no Confederate works with troops behind them were captured this day. About 8 A. M., attention was attracted to the commotion of the enemy in and near the old deserted works, apparently about to advance, and the pickets and skirmishers of the Confederates were called in. All were astonished at this and could not believe a serious attempt would be made to assail such a line as Ewell had, in open day, over such a distance. Every one on the Confederate side felt that such an attack was reckless, and hopeless in the extreme. So when it was found that a real assault was to be made, it was welcomed by the Confederates as an opportunity to pay off old scores. The Confederate artillerymen were ordered to take their places at the guns and to fire on those troops first with solid shot through the woods and with shells through the cleared openings. Soon the enemy's guns opened on ours, but scarcely a response was made to them from us on this front, his purpose with the masses of Federal infantry in view showing clearly where our fire should be concentrated. This infantry in the column formations as they are described in the reports, stepped out rapidly, with their muskets at a "right shoulder shift," in successive lines, apparently several brigades deep, well aligned and steady, without bands, but with flags flying, a most magnificent and thrilling sight, covering Ewell's whole front as far as could be seen. As this host got well under way orders were given to change fire to case shot (Schrapnel) and shells. By this time the assaulting columns increased their gait to a double quick, and on they came, shells and case (Schrapnel) shot tearing great gaps in their ranks, the roaring guns and wavering lines of Federal infantry still advancing, the scene was wonderfully inspiring to the Confederates.

Orders were given to be ready with canister, the enemy still advancing, but shaky. Soon his front columns came within canister range, and under this fire of combined canister and case (Schrapnel), he could not stand, and broke in confusion, leaving the field in disorder and his dead in front of our works. As soon as the Federal infantry had been driven from the field, orders were given to "cease firing," to save ammunition, not knowing if this or other Federal infantry would repeat the assault. The enemy's artillery

still continued firing at our lines as they had done throughout the assault. As the Confederate guns had repulsed the Federal infantry, it was unnecessary to waste ammunition at long range in practice of artillery against artillery. Probably this is why some of the reports speak of silencing the Confederate guns. Not a gun was struck or even temporarily disabled during this action.

It is impossible to conceive that any such dramatic scenes took place in this assault of infantry lines standing in front of the slashings and abatis delivering volleys into our works, as some of these reports indicate. No matter what orders for retiring had passed to the rear of the assaulting columns, those in front were absolutely routed.

That a hopeless undertaking was imposed on brave, veteran, soldiers, the very flower of the Federal Army in this effort, there can be no doubt, but the task was impossible and they did all that brave men could do.

Some of the finest officers in the Federal Army were there in that assault, many since distinguished in both military and civil life—Lieutenant-General Miles, Major-General Brooke, Governor Hartranft, and others were there.

There should be no reflection on these brave men, though in greater numbers, any more than on Pickett's men in a similar effort at Gettysburg.

The recital of this engagement brings out prominently three points of great interest and especially to soldiers of an artillery organization:

1st. The repulse of the heavy assaulting columns of the enemy, was practically by the destructive fire of artillery alone.

2nd. That this mass of infantry charging over the gradually rising, partly open, plateau for over half a mile in extent in the face of intrenched, well posted, and well served artillery, could not hope to carry such a position as Ewell's Corps held.

3rd That the meagre published accounts of the affair by the commanding generals on either side, illustrates, as is often the case, the overlooking of important and effective work of the artillery branch of an army.

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